

I saw close-up, firsthand how bright, artistic, and precocious our aspiring generation in America really is. One young man named Henry wrote: "I decided to write this letter because no one is going to tell me not to."

This moment of winter wonderment is a good time to take stock of all that has occurred over the past year. As we enter this holiday season, I am reminded of so many very kind people for whom I am grateful, particularly the joy of the children at McGregor Elementary School in Toledo, Ohio.

Happy holidays to all, and may the upcoming year bring endless joy and light.

HONORING COACH SHARI CAMPBELL

(Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Coach Shari Campbell of Clarion, who was inducted into the Pennsylvania Volleyball Coaches Association Hall of Fame for 2022.

Coach Campbell has a distinguished career of leading women's volleyball teams to victory as coach of both the Clarion Area Bobcats and the Clarion Limestone Lions volleyball teams.

Coach Campbell has also had a uniquely impressive coaching record, earning 437 wins for her team out of 507 games. Additionally, Shari Campbell's teams have won three PIAA state championships in 2012, 2020, and 2021.

Shari Campbell got her start in 1990 as a junior coach at Juniata College in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania. She later became an assistant coach at St. Bonaventure University in Allegheny, New York.

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate Coach Shari Campbell on her outstanding achievement. Most importantly, I thank her for being a coach and mentor for the young women of Clarion. Her commitment to her students is not just demonstrated by her record of wins, but also by her dedication and commitment to seeing her players succeed on and off the court.

THANKING KASSIE STAGNER

(Mr. TAKANO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank a member of my staff on the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, who will not be continuing with us into the next Congress.

Kassie Stagner has served our committee both as a clerk and a research assistant. During her time on staff, she has also shown a willingness to go the extra mile, take on any job that needs doing, and to do so with incredible attention to detail. Her work proved invaluable to many of the committee's

oversight investigations. Through long days and hard projects, Kassie brought a sense of humor and a Texas charm to everything she did.

The work of my committee, this Congress, and our government to honor and to support our veterans was made better by Kassie's service, and she will be deeply missed.

IN SUPPORT OF THE RELEASE OF PAUL WHELAN

(Mr. WALBERG asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. WALBERG. Mr. Speaker, we learned this morning of a prisoner swap with the Kremlin: basketball star Brittney Griner for the merchant of death, Viktor Bout.

Left behind once again by this administration was Michigander Paul Whelan.

While we rejoice with the Griner family, Paul's parents, constituents in my district, will soon have their fourth Christmas without their son.

Paul's family is doing their best to stay upbeat and is genuinely happy for the Griner family, as we all are. But it is hard to fathom the magnitude of disappointment with this latest lopsided swap.

We are keeping the Whelans in our prayers, just as we are keeping up the pressure. For years now, I have spoken about Paul's wrongful imprisonment on this floor. I was hoping the next time would be to celebrate his release. Sadly, it is not.

Today, once again, it is time for Paul Whelan to come home.

RECOGNIZING PENNSYLVANIA SENATOR PAT BROWNE

(Ms. WILD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. WILD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the work of, and to wish a happy birthday to, Allentown's outgoing State Senator Pat Browne.

Over the span of his 28 years in public service, Pat Browne represented the Lehigh Valley in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives and in the Senate, ascending to chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee.

While we did not agree on every issue, Senator Browne's dedication to Allentown's school district and the city's revitalization earned him popularity with Republicans, Democrats, and Independents alike, something that is altogether too rare in today's political environment. It has been an honor to work with his office over the past 4 years to bring resources to our community, and I thank him for his service and wish him a very happy birthday.

CONGRATULATING ROSS SHEPPARD

(Mr. CARTER of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the

House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Ross Sheppard for his recent selection to the Georgia 40 Under 40 list.

Ross is a successful real estate agent who wants to help buyers and sellers understand the value that historic preservation brings to the housing markets.

While many people view historic preservation and real estate development as conflicting ideas, Ross sees it differently. His desire to show people that preservation is a sustainable economic path for real estate has led him into philanthropic pursuits.

A member of the Georgia Trust and the Historic Savannah Foundation, a board member of Georgia's Old Capital Heritage Center, and a former board member of the Flannery O'Connor Andalusia Foundation, Sheppard's passion for preservation is a leading force in his life.

He has renovated and rehabilitated several historic homes, with one of his projects being featured on HGTV's "Life Under Renovation."

He was chosen as Humanitarian of the Year by his alma mater, Georgia College, and has endowed a scholarship there.

Ross resides in Savannah's Landmark Historic District, one of the most beautiful parts of Georgia's First Congressional District. He leads a life dedicated to showing others the beauty that lies beneath the surface by championing historic preservation.

I, on behalf of the entire First Congressional District of Georgia, congratulate him for his outstanding service to this State and his selection to the Georgia 40 Under 40 list.

PROTECTING MARRIAGE EQUALITY

(Ms. JACOBS of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. JACOBS of California. Mr. Speaker, this summer I officiated my brother's wedding, and it was one of the proudest moments of my life.

The love that Dylan and Kay share is incredibly special and deserves to be celebrated, recognized, and protected.

That is why I am so grateful to have voted for the Respect for Marriage Act, to honor their marriage and so many other marriages that have been created and affirmed in the 7 years since the landmark Obergefell ruling. This means so much not only to my family, but to the LGBTQ+ communities in San Diego and across the country.

This bill will take the discriminatory Defense of Marriage Act off the books, so it no longer poses an existential threat to LGBTQ+ families.

It will protect marriage equality so that a valid marriage in one State is recognized by all other States. Importantly, it will protect kids from discriminatory State laws and ensure that LGBTQ+ families can stay together.

With the passage of this bill, our government is finally catching up to the American people. This is long overdue, but it is no less meaningful for my brother and sister-in-law and hundreds of thousands of other LGBTQ+ marriages across the country.

CONTINUING TO FIGHT FOR PAUL WHELEN

(Mrs. KIM of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. KIM of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise to join the Whelan family to urge the Biden administration to get United States Marine veteran, Paul Whelan, safely home from being held hostage and wrongfully detained by Russia.

While we are glad to welcome Brittney Griner safely home to her family, to make it happen, the Biden administration ceded leverage and released a dangerous, convicted arms dealer who was in prison for conspiring to kill Americans.

This poses tremendous national security risks and will embolden Vladimir Putin to take more Americans hostage in the future.

Meanwhile, Paul Whelan and other wrongfully detained Americans remain imprisoned. I will continue to fight for their safe return home.

ONE OF THE PROUDEST VOTES I WILL EVER CAST

(Mr. JONES asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, today, I cast one of the proudest votes I will ever cast in this body. I was a “yea” on the Respect for Marriage Act.

When I was elected to this body, I became one of the first two openly gay Black Members ever to serve in Congress. Growing up closeted, I never imagined that Congress would pass a bill like this, or I would be in a position to introduce it with Representative NADLER.

I was too young to remember Congress passing the Defense of Marriage Act, but I know exactly where I was when the Supreme Court struck it down in the *United States v. Windsor*. I had just graduated law school, and I was studying for the bar exam. At the time, because of moderates like Justice Kennedy, I still had faith that the Supreme Court was committed to protecting my basic civil rights as a gay American.

That was a different Supreme Court than the one we have today. The far-right supermajority on the Supreme Court is on a rampage against fundamental rights. As members of the LGBTQ+ community prepare to face the worst assault on our rights in a decade, Congress must do whatever it takes to protect our humanity.

This bill is a great first step. It ensures that the Federal Government will

not discriminate against same-sex and interracial couples who have been legally married. But Congress must also pass other legislation to ensure marriage equality as the law of the land.

Mr. Speaker, I would conclude by simply saying that I am very grateful to this Congress and to be in this place.

BIG TECH CENSORSHIP

(Mr. LAMALFA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, in 2019, Hunter Biden foolishly abandoned a laptop at a computer repair store, a laptop that revealed Joe Biden was fully aware of his son's foreign corrupt business dealings. Not only that, but Hunter's business also profited President Biden financially and influenced foreign policy.

But the American people weren't allowed to know this before electing Joe Biden to the Presidency. Why? Because Twitter, one of the most influential distributors of content in the world, deliberately and arbitrarily suppressed news coverage to suit the political persuasions of its employees.

We have undeniable proof that Big Tech censored bad press for the Biden administration right before the 2020 election and may have even profited from doing so. This despicable collusion between liberal politics and social media, put on full display in the Twitter files, must end.

Informed voters, not biased Twitter truth manipulators, must decide the outcomes of elections.

We will never know how many voters would have changed their mind if they knew of the corruption of the Biden family and their activities. Suppression of information is the real threat to our republic, not asking questions.

Now that Republicans are back in the majority in the House, we will investigate this interference and hold Big Tech, the FBI, and the Biden family accountable.

VOTING TO PROTECT MARRIAGE EQUALITY

(Ms. LEE of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. LEE of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank this body for full support of, of course, H.R. 8404, the Respect for Marriage Act. I was so proud to support this bill.

I thank my good friend and colleague Chairman NADLER for his leadership and DAVID CICILLINE and Speaker PELOSI for bringing this important bill to the floor.

Today, I voted to protect marriage equality across the country. Following the Supreme Court's shameful decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, rightwing extremists, who have been visibly organizing for decades to curtail hard-won

rights, have set their sights on other freedoms.

We cannot let Justice Clarence Thomas even consider overturning the constitutional right to marriage equality. What is coming next?

Today, the bipartisan Respect for Marriage Act will enshrine marriage equality into Federal law.

As one of the founding members of the Equality Caucus, along with my good friend Congressman Barney Frank, today, I am reminded of Martin Luther King's profound insight when he said that “the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.”

I thank all those who voted for this. This is a historic day, and we did the right thing. Thank God we are moving forward in this country.

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PAT SMITH WILL BE GREATLY MISSED

(Ms. FOXX asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, there are many wonderful people who work in and around the House to help us do the people's business. Some are very visible, and some are less so. Often the less visible are some of the most valuable in many ways.

One of those people is Patricia Smith, Pat, who is a true patriot and works hard every day to serve others. Ms. Pat prepares and serves food in the Republican Cloakroom. She is unfailingly sweet and caring, not only to Members but to everyone.

In addition to her service in the House, Ms. Pat serves at her church and volunteers on weekends, feeding the homeless. She lives her faith every minute of every day.

As Saint Francis said: Preach a sermon every day. When necessary, use words.

Ms. Pat does not need to use words. She lives the Gospel every day. She will soon be retiring, and she will be greatly missed.

Congratulations, Ms. Pat, on a life well lived. I will miss you and your example more than you can know.

TODAY IS HISTORIC

(Ms. JACKSON LEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, this is a very historic day.

We overturned and dismissed the words of Justice Thomas that the rights of Americans should be denied.

We voted for the Respect for Marriage Act that will be signed by the President of the United States.

Then in the midst of darkness, Brittney Griner was swapped and is on her way home. Negotiations by the hostage negotiating team took months because Mr. Putin would not negotiate.